The Report Committee for Risa Jane Chavez
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following Report:

Being Invisible and In-Between: Racial Identity Development and School Belonging in Multiracial Adolescents

APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:

Marie-Anne P. Suizzo, Supervisor

Germine H. Awad

Being Invisible and In-Between: Racial Identity Development and School Belonging in Multiracial Adolescents

by

Risa Jane Chavez

Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Education

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2019

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my report advisor, Marie-Anne Suizzo, whose encouragement and advice helped me develop confidence as a scholar. Your authenticity in getting to know students and genuine passion for teaching and research were always so refreshing. I would also like to thank Dr. Germine (Gigi) Awad who advocated for me and challenged me to think critically about concepts and issues related to race.

My gratitude also goes to my community in Austin and everyone who has embraced and encouraged me over the past two years. My educational psychology cohort, my adopted STEM education cohort, my brothers and sisters at The Well Community Church, and my colleagues at Haymaker – you have supported me in so many ways both in my academic career and my personal development. Thank you for making Austin feel like home. I would especially like to thank Ben David for his unwavering patience and unconditional support. From brainstorming topics to proofreading papers to scouting for jobs – you were never too busy for a request of any magnitude. Thank you for having confidence in me when I didn't have it in myself and for always reminding me of what is really important.

To my students who inspired my pursuit of a masters is educational psychology – You gave me new perspective and served as a constant reminder of who and what I am fighting for. This world is a better place with all of you in it.

Most importantly, I would like to thank my parents, Lance and Jane Chavez. No words can truly express my gratitude. You have always been my biggest fans and supported my wildest dreams. Thank you for giving me the freedom to pursue the path to which God has called me, the encouragement to persevere in the midst of challenges, and the security to know that I am never alone in this adventure.

Abstract

Being Invisible and In-Between: Racial Identity Development and School Belonging in Multiracial Adolescents

Risa Jane Chavez, M.Ed.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2019

Supervisor: Marie-Anne Suizzo

The number of adolescents identifying as multiracial in the United States is growing rapidly. However, the experiences of this population have not been investigated to the extent merited by such an increase. Multiracial adolescents face complex processes of racial identity development due to the contextual fluidity and subjectivity of racial identification both by others and themselves. This unique development is influenced most by the people most proximal to the adolescents such as family members, friends, and teachers. As adolescents develop their identity, they come to understand how they fit into social spaces and institutions. Of specific importance in the period of adolescence is feelings of connection to the academic environment, a concept known as school belonging. School belonging is related to important life outcomes such as academic achievement, motivation, physical and psychological health, and prosocial behavior. Similar to racial identity development, multiracial adolescents may have unique experiences of school belonging due to the complexities of identifying as multiracial. This literature review will explore the available research on multiracial identity

development and feelings of school belonging, expose gaps in the literature, and propose future directions for the current field of study.

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Introduction

"Mixed." It is a term casually used in reference to individuals with mixed race heritage. Most likely, the term does not intend to highlight the rich complexities of being "mixed race," or multiracial. Rather, it implies that multiracial people are not fully anything. As children born into interracial families grow up, they must learn what it means to be multiracial by negotiatiating between multiple racial identities (Terry and Winston, 2010). This racial identity development is influenced by people such as parents, peers, and teachers who convey both implicit and explicit messages to multiracial youth through a process of racial socialization.

While the home environment is often the most influential socializing agent in young children (Brunsma, 2005), school begins to gain importance as children move into and through adolescence between the ages of 10-19 (Cheng and Klugman, 2010; World Health Organization, 2019). The relationships built at school often influence motivation, achievement, and self-perception (Goodenow and Grady, 1993; Goodenow, 1993). For multiracial students who may not feel like they belong to any one racial group, developing a sense of belonging at school and with peers might be incredibly important in supporting a healthy identity.

The multiracial population in the United States is growing at an unprecedented rate (Lee and Bean, 2004) and while research on multiracial populations is expanding, the amount of literature currently available does not mirror the impact of that growth. The uniqueness of multiracial identity and its relation to school belonging merit investigation. I will begin this review with a brief history of multiracialism in the United States, followed by literature reviews on the identity development and school belonging of multiracial adolescents. I will then recognize the limitations of the research and this review and suggest further directions.

A major challenge in researching multiracial individuals is accounting for and accurately representing the diversity in population. The limited number of studies that exist use numerous definitions of "multiracial" and methods of identifying multiracial individuals, making synthesis of the literature challenging. This complexity adds even more nuance to this area of research and its application to future studies. For the purposes of this review, "biracial" describes someone belonging to two racial groups and "multiracial" describes someone belonging to two or more racial groups. Therefore, all biracial individuals are multiracial but not all multiracial people are biracial. In this paper, the term "multiracial" will be used in reference to individuals or a population of people who are comprised of, and identify with, multiple racial ancestries (Root, 1992; Burke & Kao, 2013). "Biracial" will be used exclusively for a person or persons identifying with exactly two races. Distinctions will be dependent on classifications made within each piece of literature.

History of Multiracialism in the United States

Legal and social segregation of racial groups

The United States of America has a very racialized history. One of the earliest and most influential examples of racial tension is the era of slavery, a system in which skin color superseded personhood and turned people into property. During this time, many biracial children were born as a result of slave owners raping their Black female slaves (Hallam, 2004). However, the "one-drop rule," which states that any person with Black ancestry is considered Black (Williams, 2009), ignored these biracial chilren's White heritage and declared them to be Black, and therefore slaves under their father's rule. The "one-drop rule" is a term occasionally used interchangeably with the hypodescent rule, which identifies mixed-raced persons as belonging to the subordinate race and has been upheld in courts in the United States as recently as 1986 (Davis, 1991). Both classifications were used for centuries to oppress people of color and maintain the racial hierarchy. Unfortunately, the "one-drop" and hypodescent rules are still informally implemented in the assessment, stereotyping, and (dis)approval of minority persons. A similar issue is found in skin color stratification in which status is determined by the lightness or darkness of one's skin. Historically and contemporarily, lighter skin (ie. closer to being White), affords higher status and better treatment (Crawford and Alaggia, 2008). These categorizations, and the prejudice that accompany them, can have widespread impact on the psychological, social, and academic development of biracial children (Shih & Sanchez, 2005).

Legalized racial segregation applied even to romantic relationships in the form of anti-miscegenation laws, which forbade marriage, romantic and intimate relationships, and cohabitation between people of two different races. In 1967, the pivotal court case Loving vs. Virginia deemed these laws unconstitutional. However, anti-miscegenation laws continued to

exists in the United States, with Alabama being the last to repeal theirs in the year 2000 (PBS, 2019). Although it might seem so, romantic racial segregation was not encouraged solely out of feelings of prejudice. Some opponents argued that the multiracial children resulting from interracial unions would experience struggles from which their monoracial counterparts would be exempt (Childs, 2006; Nakashima, 1992; Majete, 1999).

Theoretically, many racial segregation laws applied to all race-mixing but in practicality, they were meant to maintain social boundaries between Black people and White people and protect White racial purity. Despite the abolition of legal enforcement, the social effects of these laws are still obvious. For example, Qian (1997) found that marriages between White and Black individuals occur less frequently than marriages between White and Asian or White and Hispanic individuals. Lee and Bean (2004) further posit that what was once the "Black-White divide" is becoming the "Black-non Black" divide, providing evidence that racial boundaries among White, Latino and Asian groups are weakening while the boundaries between Black and other racial groups remains stable.

Formal recognition of multiracial classification

Not surprisingly, formal recognition of multiracial identities has been a much debated topic. Although the debate continues, multiracial individuals gained national recognition in the year 2000 when the U.S. Census first gave respondents the option of selecting more than one racial classification (U.S. Census, 2019). Prior to the 2000 Census, some activist groups challenged the singularity of race and acknowledged the need for a category that represented people who identify with multiple races. Others saw multiracialism as a threat to claims of discrimination against minorities (Williams, 2006). As a compromise, individuals choosing to identify as "multiracial" on the U.S. Census can do so by selecting "two or more races" and/or

designating multiple races. The latter allows for multiracial individuals to be included in the demographic data for each group in which they belong (Nobles, 2000; U.S. Census, 2019).

Despite the the inclusion of "multiracial," only 3% of respondents chose a multiracial identification on the 2000 Census (Jones and Smith 2001; Lee and Bean 2004). In the ten years between the 2000 and 2010 Census, the number of individuals identifying as two or more races went from approximately 7 million to over 9 million, an increase of 32 percent. Additionally, the adolescent biracial and multiracial population rose at an even higher rate of 46 percent (Brittain et al., 2013). Providing a wider date range, Pew Research Center data showed that between 1970 and 2013, the number of multiracial children born per year grew from 1 in 100 to 1 in 10 (Echols, Ivanich, & Graham, 2018). Lee and Bean (2004) predict that by the year 2050, one in five Americans will be multiracial. It is important to recognize that this statistic reflects both a growth in the multiracial population due to greater acceptance of interracial relationships and a rise in multiracial classification due to formalized options.

Multiracial Identity Development

"Identity is understood to be a negotiated, fluid, multifaceted sense of one's perspectives and values, a fluid and purposeful positioning, constantly shaped by the affordances and constraints of one's context(s)" (Faircloth, 2009, p. 325).

Multiracial individuals are a racial minority, which means that they may experience challenges similar to other racial minorities. However, multiracial individuals have unique and complex experiences that distinguish them from monoracial minority groups. The specific experiences of interest in this section are identity development and racial socialization. Race is a socially constructed, and often hierarchical, classification system that depends heavily on one's phenotypic characteristics. The subjective nature of race lends to a flexibility in its ascription for others and for oneself (Clair & Denis, 2015; American Sociological Association, 2019).

Sheets and Hollins (1999) define racial identity as the association with a sense of belonging to a certain race. According to Herring (1992), "racial identity is the most widespread conflict encountered by biracial youth" (p. 125). Children learn about and develop racial identities through racial socialization, a process in which others teach children how to establish, understand, and navigate their race in societal contexts (Gaskin, 2019; Coard & Sellers, 2005).

Lewis (2006) notes that, "For multiracial people, there is an additional layer in the identity development process. It involves creating a sense of self by assembling pieces of their heritage that others view as incompatible or mutually exclusive" (p. 40). Multiracial identity development is complex just like all other forms of identity development. However, the external pressures and internal conflicts that come with the navigation and reconciliation of multiple, sometimes conflicting, identities suggest that multiracial adolescents experience different stressors than monoracial adolescents. Despite the challenges, scholars have found that racial

socialization is positively related to racial identity exploration and resolution in biracial and biethnic youth (Brittain et al., 2013).

In addition to the considerations specific to multiracial socialization and identity development, there are intricacies in the research on multiracial populations. Unlike monoracial groups, the potential combinations within a multiracial population are innumerable. Although people who identify as multiracial may have some common experiences, the complexity of mixed heritage complicates a collective identity. In order to best represent unique differences between and within groups, the current review will articulate the racial demographics among studies as clearly as possible.

National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health

Many of the studies (Georgiades, Boyle, & Fife, 2013; Vaquera, 2009; Burke & Kao, 2013; Cheng & Klugman, 2010; Quillian & Redd, 2009) in the current review analyze data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health), a survey of a nationally representative sample of 7^{th}-12^{th} grade students. Add Health data collection is divided among four waves ranging from September 1994 to 2009. The studies presented in this review only used data from Waves I and II which consisted of in-school questionnaires and at-home interviews. Data collection included information on demographics, social relationships, physical and psychological health, family characteristics, and academic expectations (Data Sharing for Demographic Research, 2019).

The main strengths that make Add Health an attractive data source for researchers of multiracial adolescents are the large sample size of 90,118 students (4,500 of whom identify as multiracial in at least one context) and comprehensive reports of student race. The at-home questionnaire asks for the racial background of each parent and the self-identified race of the

students. The in-school questionnaire also asks for the self-identified race of the students. Furthermore, students self-identify their race at each point throughout the longitudinal study. By collecting this data in a multitude of ways, researchers can explore contextual variations in racial identification (i.e. does the student self-identify the same or differently at school versus at home?), incongruence between racial heritage and self-identification (i.e. does the student choose a monoracial identification despite having parents of different races?), and developmental changes in self-identification (i.e. does identity remain constant or evolve as students age?). The breadth of questions accompanying demographics might also afford researchers the opportunity to make connections between these trends and the social, psychological, academic, and physical factors observed in participant responses (Data Sharing for Demographic Research, 2019).

Ecological Systems Theory

Ecological Systems Theory states that children are socialized through mutually dependent "systems" in which they participate. Each system is made up of multiple subsystems, all of which vary in their proximity to and influence upon the child. For example, the most proximal system to a child is his or her microsystem, which includes relations in the child's immediate environment such as family members, neighborhood friends, and school teachers. However, a macrosystem is more distal and made up of the ideologies, laws, and customs of one's culture and world (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory clearly articulates the interconnectedness of multiple systems and allows researchers to examine the impact of each system on children's socialization. This theory provides a framework for examining racial identity development that is attractive to many researchers concerned with multiracial adolescents, as exhibited by the wealth of studies that cite it (e.g. Chiu, Chow, McBride, & Mol; 2016; Gonzales-Backen, 2013). Conveniently, the Ecological Systems Theory

also serves as a foundation for understanding the importance of school belonging in multiracial adolescents, which will be reviewed later in this paper. Given this framework, the most prominent influencers (or socializers) on racial identity development identified in the research on multiracial adolescents are parents, teachers, and peers.

Fluidity of multiracial identity

A unique characteristic of identity development in multiracial individuals is the freedom to select a racial identity, afforded by an ambiguous physical appearance (Chen and Hamilton, 2012) and membership in multiple racial groups (Root, 1992). Studies have found that multiracial youth are more fluid in their racial self-identification compared to their monoracial counterparts (Doyle & Kao, 2007; Harris & Sim, 2002) and there is a more frequent incongruence between the racial identity assigned by others and racial self-identification (Burke & Kao, 2013). Research on the fluidity of multiracial identity has explored trends both across time and context.

Echols, Ivanich, & Graham (2018) used data from the UCLA Middle School Diversity Project to examine approximately 6,000 students' changes in racial self-identification throughout middle school. At four points in the study, students self-reported their racial identification by selecting 1 out of 13 categories in response to the question, "What is your ethnic group?" If students selected "multiethnic/biracial," they were asked to clarify which ethnicities or races. The study found that most changes in multiracial self-identification occurred later in middle school (between spring of seventh grade and spring of eight grade), illustrating a growth in the fluidity of multiracial self-identification throughout adolescence. The authors suggested that this fluidity might allow multiracial youth the opportunity to experiment with identity in ways inaccessible to monoracial youth, giving the former a developmental advantage.

Other studies have extended this research to show that the fluidity of multiracial identity is not constrained to adolescence, but continues throughout the lifespan (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Doyle & Kao, 2007). While multiracial identity is impacted by age and development, it is also context-dependent. Harris and Sim (2002) found that the majority of multiracial adolescents adopt contextually fluid identities. While about one-third of participants in their study identified with two separate monoracial groups, most identified as multiracial in at least one context. Although racial identity is fluid, especially for multiracial individuals, early racial designations made by people in a child's microsystem do impact their long-term racial identity development (Czimadia and Ispa, 2014).

Phenotypic influences on multiracial identity

Physical characteristics are heavily related to social perception and the research suggests a bidirectional relationship between racial identification and social perception (Burke & Kao, 2013). As evidence of the persisting effects of the one-drop rule, or hypodescence, part-White multiracial individuals have typically been identified by others as belonging to their racial minority group based on physical appearance (Davis, 1991). "White" identifications by others were only accessible by those with physical features that could "pass" as White (Stonequist, 1935) and research shows that these effects surpass social perception into self-identification. When forced to identify with a single race, dark-skinned Black-White biracial individuals are more likely to identify as Black, while their light-skinned counterparts are more likely to identify as White (Herman, 2004; Korgen, 1998). Furthermore, Czimadia & Ispa (2014) suggest that parents of dark-skinned Black-White biracial children may promote in them a Black identity because the parents know that the children will be viewed as Black by society. However, they also posit that parents of light-skinned Black-White biracial children may choose for them a

White identity in an attempt to enhance their social status. Although the children in both examples have the same racial makeup, skin color leads parents to take opposite approaches to racial socialization. While, lighter skin is associated with seizing opportunity, darker skin is associated with preparation and protection.

In this review, many examples concerning phenotypic influences on racial identification center on Black-White biracial individuals because this group is most prevalent in the research. However, physical appearance is similarly impactful in the racial identification of multiracial individuals from other backgrounds. According to the research, Asian-White biracial children have greater access to being "White" than other multiracial groups such as Black-White, Hispanic-White, and Native American-White (Qian, 2004). In a study on school belonging in multiracial adolescents, Burke and Kao (2013) identified multiracial group trends in identity fluidity across contexts. Black-White biracial participants, 68% self-identify as biracial both at home and at school.

Lopez (2003) conducted a study on the racial identification trends of 639 freshman in a diverse, public high school in California. The results support research on the varying identifications among multiracial groups. Figure 1 illustrates student responses to the item, "Choose only one [race]." Before evaluating the results, it is important to note the inclusion of the category, "other." Although this question attempts to detect the most salient race to multiracial youth through forced choice, selections of the choice "other" might signify students who refuse to adopt a monoracial identity.

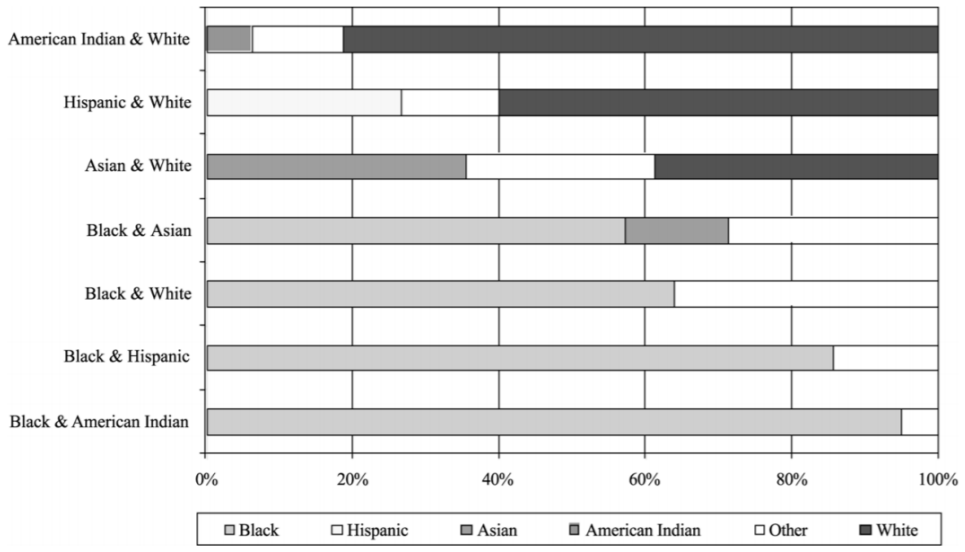

Figure 1. Responses of multiracial students when asked to choose a single race identity (Lopez, 2003).

As evidenced by the bar graph, the racial makeup of multiracial adolescents influences their racial self-identification. American Indian-White and Hispanic-White participants were more likely to claim a White identity than the a minority identity, and Asian-White students were equally likely to self-identify as either White or Asian. These findings symbolize earlier claims that racial boundaries are weakening between these groups, allowing some mixed race individuals greater flexibility in racial self-identification. Alternatively, none of the Black-White respondents in the study self-identified as White, signifying the modern-day influence of the one-drop rule. Rather, a majority of all groups with Black ancestry self-identified as Black, with only Black-Asian adolescents claiming their other minority race. The results of this study emphasize the role that phenotype plays in racial self-identification and highlight the salience of White and Black identities that has persisted throughout history.

Parental influence on multiracial identity

Parents are typically a child's primary source of racial socialization early in life (Brunsma, 2005). However, in interracial families, racial socialization may pose different challenges. In a study on multiracial identity development, Rockquemore et al. (2006) stated,

“Unless a parent is also mixed race, the majority of mixed race children learn about race from one or more adults who cannot completely understand their racial reality" (p. 207). This quote supports the idea that monoracial parents cannot fully relate to the challenges that accompany being biracial and might feel uncertain about helping their biracial children navigate the ambiguity of dual-race identification. The absence of this shared experiences can lead to feelings of isolation for the child (Root, 1992, 1996). In contrast to monoracial families in which both parents have similar racial histories, interracial families must choose to promote in their children a single racial identity, a balance of multiple racial identities, or a denial of race altogether (Herring, 1992).

Some research has found that family socioeconomic status (SES) and parent education affect parents’ racial identification of their children. Brunsma (2005) found that higher SES increased identification away from the minority group, which aligns with the earlier mentioned orientation towards Whiteness to gain social privilege. Interestingly, higher level education has the reverse effect. Using 2000 Census data, Roth (2005) evaluated the racial identification patterns of part-Black multiracial adolescents. The results revealed that parental education correlated with a tendency to select “interracial” or “other” rather than “Black” identification for their child. The author hypothesized that this trend is that of “norm rejection”, in which parents challenge the historical patterns of racial identification imposed by the one-drop rule. Furthermore, Qian (2004) noted that interracial families in which both parents received graduate degrees are more likely to identify their child as “Black.” This finding could be attributed to a level of security afforded through educational attainment or an attempt to disprove stereotypes.

Regardless of socioeconomic status, family conversations about race and multiracial heritage are crucial for healthy racial identity development. Multiracial adolescents across

studies on racial socialization and identity development expressed the importance of open communication, either showing appreciation that their parents discussed race or frustrated that they did not (Brittain et al., 2013; Czimadia and Ispa, 2014; Crawford and Alaggia, 2008). Messages conveying knowledge about one's heritage increases children's understanding of their history, group membership, and positive feelings about their racial group(s) (Brittain et al., 2013). In response to the results of a study in which biracial adolescents completed interviews concerning their families and identity development, Crawford and Alaggia (2008) concluded that a family's willingness to discuss racial issues significantly influenced racial identity development in children.

Unfortunately, some parents either do not recognize the need for racial identification or they avoid the process due to the discomfort it inflicts. Crawford and Alaggia (2008) found that parents' silence about race and racial identity seemed to be the most detrimental approach to healthy racial identity development in youth. Adolescents who said that their parents never addressed race left them feeling ill-prepared to answer difficult questions, unsupported in understanding prejudice and developing a healthy identity, and unconfident in standing up for themselves during discussions about race (Crawford & Alaggia, 2008).

Social support is also a key role of parents and children's needs for validation urge them to value the perspectives of close adults such as parents and teachers. It is important that these people recognize the experiences and identities of children in order to develop trust. As a result, children feel that their racial identification is accepted, their experiences are legitimized, and their identities are honored. In the absence of such validation, students may feel isolated, silenced and devalued (Crawford and Alaggia, 2008).

A common barrier to adopting a multiracial identity for children is the absence of one parent. Some children grow up in single-parent homes or in blended families that do not include another member who looks like them. Crawford & Alaggia (2008) found that adolescents expressed a range of sentiments about parental presence. For example, one student emphasized his need for both parents' input: "If I'm gonna learn who I am, I'm going to need both parents and experience both worlds for sure." Another expressed her resentment and detachment from the race of an absent parent: "He's [her father] this White man, he hasn't been here for me, all he represents is pain and I don't know anything about his culture so I don't want to have anything to do with it." A third participant explained the cultural influences of her parents: "I grew up with my mom only, my whole life… and although I've always maintained who I am, half Black, half White, I've always identified myself as being Black because I have the Jamaican influences of my mother" (p. 90). As evidenced by these quotes and supported by the Ecological Systems Theory, adolescents are influenced most by those in their immediate environment. Since families are the primary contributors to children's socialization, the absence of a parent and the parent's experience may bias their racial identification towards that of their present parent (Crawford and Alaggia, 2008). Parents have the strongest influence on identity development in children's early years (Brunsma, 2005). As children move into adolescence, they become more exposed to and influenced by non-familial adults and peers.

Teacher influence on multiracial identity

Some scholars argue that a person's self-selected racial identity is less significant than society's perception of their racial identification (Williams, 2011). While the former is an inherently important self-perception, the latter could largely dictate treatment by others and access to society's resources. Participants in one study supported this claim, agreeing that

"mainstream society and its schools, as socialization agents, deny [multiracial youth] their humanity by denying them an identity that reflects who they truly are" (Cruz-Jansen, 1999, p. 4). In adolescent identity development, the research shows that teachers are an impactful school-based socializer.

In general, students view teachers as authority figures who play a pivotal role in their academic success. Dusek and Joseph (1985) discovered a cyclical effect in which teachers' perceptions of students affected expectations of students, which affected achievement of students. Student achievement then goes on to influence teacher perception and the cycle continues. Additional research has shown that teachers tend to have higher academic expectations for White students compared to Black students (Ferguson, 1998) and view multiracial children more favorably than they do Black children (Williams, 2009).

Applying Dusek and Joseph's (1985) theory, these preferences could influence interaction, expectations, and achievement of children who are more "White." However, favor does not always manifest in advantage. Wardle (1999) noted that multiracial and multiethnic students are both ignored by and suffer from a multicultural emphasis in schools because teachers do not truly understand their students' heritage, nor are they equipped with the knowledge to incorporate the multiracial student experience into the curricula (Williams, 2011). Some teachers are ignorant to the reality that biracial students have an experience unique from that of monoracial students, rendering them invisible in the classroom (Wardle, 1999; Cruz-Jansen, 1999). As one student in the Williams (2011) study put it, "It's just not on their radar" (p. 191). Chiong (1998) found that some teachers who were aware of the misrepresentation of multiracial children as monoracial still chose to identify these children how they believed society would perceive them.

According to the Ecological Systems Theory framework, teachers are within a student's microsystem and therefore, highly influential socializers. Students value the perspectives of their teachers and look to them for identity validation and social support (Eccles, 1999). Teachers must recognize students' unique experiences and identities in order to develop trust and maintain strong relationships. As a result, students feel that their racial identification is accepted, their experiences are legitimized, and their identities are honored. In the absence of such validation, students may feel isolated, silenced and devalued (Crawford and Alaggia, 2008).

School influences on multiracial identity

The racial makeup of schools contributes to students' range of identities (Cheng & Klugman, 2010). Williams (2011) found that students more often identified as biracial in schools with greater racial diversity that recognized complex identities. However, in schools with fewer, more distinct racial groups, biracial students were more likely to choose a single race. Furthermore, some parents in this study intentionally selected schools for their children based on both academic rigor and population diversity. Exposure to a diverse group of peers positively influenced some participants who finally learned how to embrace their Black and biracial identities despite being raised in predominantly White communities.

"The concept of America is taught through the schools. We hold the expectation that schools prepare citizens to be Americans" (Cruz-Jansen, 1999, p. 5). While citizenship is a component of an American education, almost all curriculum and standards center around mainstream culture, a culture that is White, middle-class, and heteronormative. Students are measured against this standard regardless of their backgrounds or identities and interventions are developed to help "underachieving" students overcome their deficits (Weiner, 2006) and meet the threshold of success.

"For female students and students of color, it is not just what they are taught but what they are not taught that hurts them" (Cruz-Jansen, 1999, p. 5). Education researchers say that "students need to be taught in ways that are responsive to their cultural and ethnic backgrounds" (Williams, 2011). Much of school curriculum in the United States is centered around the "White experience." In order for students to deeply connect to the curriculum, they need to see themselves in it. Rarely are the experiences of racial minorities considered and included in lessons outside of "special" events such as Black History Month and Cinco de Mayo, or within the framework of White dominance such as the Trail of Tears and the Underground Railroad. Even more rare is the appearance of mutiracial people, who are all but absent. Participants in the Cruz-Jansen (2009) study claimed that representations of biracial people were nonexistent in school curriculum. During the few lessons that focused on culture, teachers forced biracial students to participate in ways that "fit the theme," keeping strict divisions between heritages (p. 7). When asked about his school experience, one enraged participant stated, "I feel so betrayed right now. So entirely betrayed by the system… They lied to me my whole life, and I bought it hook, line, and sinker… I didn't learn about my culture. I learned about everybody else's but mine" (p. 8).

Even when the experiences of racial minority students are included in the curriculum, how does this impact mutiracial students? For example, during the study of slavery in America, a student who is Black-White biracial may experience a great deal of internal conflict as they learn about and identify with both the oppressors and the oppressed. In remembering a lesson on slavery, a participant in the Williams (2011) study stated, "I thought it was interesting, but… I kind of felt a little uncomfortable at times just being around Black History Month, because I wasn't sure if I was perceived differently when people were talking about it. I wasn't really sure"

(p. 192). Multiracial individuals bring unique histories, perspectives and experiences. Unfortunately, these contributions are not always recognized, excluding students who "just want to be part of the story" (McCarthey and Moje, 2002, p. 232).

Contrary to some scholars, Williams (2009) found that most teachers in her study were aware of the struggles of their multiracial students but only addressed them within "the context of other matters that had a racial theme" (p. 796). This lack of acknowledgment of the uniqueness of a child's experience and identity contributes to feelings of identity confusion, social isolation, and school detachment. "Pluralism is not being promoted sufficiently" (Williams, 2011, p. 190) and racial boundaries are still ubiquitous in schools, proving that there is still a great deal of work to be done.

Peer and friend influence on multiracial identity

While diverse school environments might provide adolescents access to a variety of people, peer groups and friendship choice is not always indicative of school composition (Echols, Ivanich, & Graham, 2018). As adolescents enter their middle school years, peers become a primary socializer, influencing interests, motivation, and identity (Kiefer, Alley, & Ellerbock, 2015). Research has shown that adolescent patterns of racial self-identification are significantly related to the racial/ethnic identification of peers and friends (Hamm, 2000). Herman (2004) identified an additional trend; over the course of middle school, only friends maintained their influence over adolescent multiracial identification. Echols, Ivanich, & Graham (2018) confirmed this observation with their findings that diverse classmates strongly impacted multiracial identification in 6th grade, less in 7th grade, and insignificantly in 8th grade. However multiracial identification was strongly related to the diversity of friends throughout 8th grade.

These social connections can also influence non-multiracial identification. In a study by Campbell (2007), Black/White biracial individuals were forced to choose a single-race identity. Results showed that social connection to the White community was related to a higher chance of selecting a White identity. In combination with the plethora of other research explored, these findings support Cruz-Jansen's (1999) claim that multiracial adolescents serve as "natural bridges between cultures" and could be pivotal agents in the work towards racial harmony.

An additional challenge for multiracial individuals in understanding their multiracialism in the lack of representation in formal spaces such as the media and government. Although a thorough investigation of the impacts of this absence of multiracial role models is outside the scope of this literature review, it is still an important point to recognize. Limited examples of successful multiracial people and restricted access to individuals with shared experiences can lead to social isolation and identity ambiguity for multiracial adolescents (Root, 1992). Conversely, being exposed to people who understand the conflicts inherent in a multiracialism can build connections, validate experiences, clarify identity, and lessen feelings of marginalization (Root, 1992).

School Belonging

> "The extent to which students perceive they belong in a school setting is related to positive social, psychological, and academic orientations" (Nichols, 2008, p. 146).

Like many psychological well-being factors, feelings of school belonging are prone to change as children develop through adolescence and into adulthood. School belonging, which is defined as a social connection to and identification with teachers, peers, and academic institutions that make students feel valued, included, and encouraged (Goodenow, 1993; Gillen-O'Neel & Fuligni, 2013). Middle schoolers are especially popular in school belonging research given the amount of transition, identity development, and peer selection they experience in a relatively short time period (Umana-Taylor et al., 2014; Newman & Newman, 1976). Longitudinal studies have found that feelings of school belonging decline over the course of middle school for most students (Quillian & Redd, 2009). However, it should not be assumed that all students experience school belonging in the same ways.

In a study on the psychological and social well-being of multiracial adolescents, Campbell and Eggerling-Boeck (2006) found that multiracial students scored lower on items measuring social acceptance, a construct related to school belonging. Furthermore, Faircloth (2009) posited that feelings of school belonging are supported by the process of identity development. These two claims combined with the previous review on multiracial identity development merit further investigation of the school belonging experiences of multiracial adolescents. Unfortunately, there is little research on school belonging for multiracial students specifically. Therefore, important trends found within the school belonging literature will be applied to the multiracial experience as appropriate.

Within the literature, there are other constructs similar to school belonging such as school engagement and school attachment. Whereas "school belonging" focuses on the affective facets of school experience, "school engagement" denotes the behavioral, cognitive and emotional responses to the experience and is often measured by variables such as homework completion, class attendance, and misconduct (Burke & Kao, 2013; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Given these key distinctions, research on "school engagement" will be excluded from this review unless there are key findings related to school belonging. Alternatively, Cheng & Klugman (2010) define school attachment as, "a sense of belonging in school" (p. 151) and researchers often use this term interchangeably with "school belonging" in the literature (e.g. Burke & Kao, 2013). Therefore, further review will assume an empirical equivalence between "school belonging" and "school attachment" and represent the data accordingly.

Academic outcomes and school belonging

In order to understand the role school belonging plays for adolescents, it is important to recognize the relations it has to measurements of well-being and achievement. Research on school belonging does not identify significant differences in these relations between monoracial and multiracial youth (Burke & Kao, 2013; Irvin et al., 2011). Therefore, the following findings aim to situate school belonging of multiracial adolescents in a larger framework of academic and well-being outcomes that will support the discussions that follow.

There is extensive support for positive relationships between school belonging and factors such as motivation (Gillen-O'Neel & Fuligni, 2013; Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Anderman, 1999), academic achievement (Janosz et al., 2008), prosocial behavior (Georgiades, Boyle, and Fife, 2013;), self-worth and school safety (Bellmore et al., 2004; Juvonen et al., 2006), and future aspirations (Wong, Parent & Konishi, 2019). Quillian & Redd (2009) built

upon previous research and identified a direct relationship between some of these factors. While school belonging was found to be predicted by prior academic achievement and motivation, it was not predicted by students' expectation of success once GPA was controlled for. Additionally, school belonging seems to be a protective factor against the negative effects of discrimination (Huynh & Gillen-O'Neel, 2016), bully and peer victimization (Davis et al., 2019), and social anxiety (Georgiades, Boyle, and Fife, 2013). Supportive school environments can be especially influential for students who struggle in school (Hughes, Im, & Allee, 2015). Collectively, this research illustrates the importance of school belonging in creating positive schooling experiences for all adolescents.

Goodenow and Grady (1993) conducted a study with 303 urban junior high students (grades 7-9). Students were administered scales measuring school belonging, friends' value of school success, motivation, effort and persistence. The authors found that higher feelings of school belonging were related to greater motivation and academic engagement. Compared to suburban students in other studies (Goodenow, 1993), these urban students had similar motivation scores but lower school belonging and friends' values scores. The authors drew some intuitive links from their results. Feelings of value and support convey to students that they have access to the necessary resources to be successful. According to self-efficacy theory, feeling capable of success increases motivation and ultimately enhances performance (Bandura, 1997). Feelings of belonging encourage greater engagement, which often leads to higher performance and achievement outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Such a positive trajectory attenuates disengagement, disidentification and risk of dropping out (Fine, 1986; Wehlage, 1989; Finn, 1989).

Given the importance of school belonging and the uniqueness of multiracial identity development, it is important to consider how multiracial adolescents navigate school environments and interpret their places within them. The literature identifies multiple factors that contribute to school belonging such as supportive teachers and staff (Kiefer, Alley & Ellerbock, 2013), close and positive peer relationships (Ellerbrock, C., Kiefer, S.M., & Alley, K.M., 2014) responsive and diverse academic environments (National Middle School Association, 2010), and ethnically congruent school populations (Georgiades, Boyle, & Fife, 2013).

Peer influence on school belonging

Multiple theories have been used to explain friend selection in multiracial adolescents, two of which are bridging and polyracialism. Bridging proposes that multiracial individuals select friends from the multiple racial groups to which they belong, allowing them to connect people from different racial backgrounds in social settings. Polyracialism posits that racial distinction is a less salient factor for multiracial individuals when choosing friends, which leads to a more diverse friend group (Quillian and Redd, 2009).

As children enter adolescence, peers and friends become more influential players in their lives (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000) and throughout middle school, peer reactions and peer approval garner importance (Newman & Newman, 1976; Brown & Larson, 2009; Hamm, 2000). Adolescence can be a time especially detrimental to multiracial adolescents who are more susceptible to rejection by monoracial peers (Korgen, 1998; Tizard & Ann, 1993; Williams, 1996; Twine, 1996; Christian, 2000; Dalmage, 2000; Root, 2001; Miville et al., 2005). Root (2001) found that multiracial students experienced harassment from the single-race groups with which they overlapped, but not from members of nonoverlapping groups. Given that most adolescents seek friendship with similar-race peers (Herring, 1992), this rejection could lead to

negative outcomes such as isolation or giving in to peer pressure in search of acceptance (Gibbs, 1987).

As mentioned earlier, peers and friends tend to have similar levels of influence at the beginning of adolescence but the influence of friends increases over time (Echols, Ivanich, & Graham, 2018; Herman, 2004). Research has found that, throughout the middle school years, adolescents' friends become a stronger predictor of behavior compared to behavior predicting choice in friends (Gremmen et al., 2017; Mercken et al., 2009). Therefore, friend choice is an important component in identity development and feelings of belonging.

Much of the research investigating multiracial adolescents in academic spaces focuses on Black/White biracial individuals. Although scholars have found that students who are Black/White biracial typically self-identify as Black (Harris and Sim, 2002; Herman, 2004; Lee and Bean, 2004), their friend choices are influenced by their multiracial identity. In their study, Doyle and Kao (2007) found that Black/White biracial adolescents are equally likely to have a best friend who is Black (41%) or White (42%). This finding supports the claim that multiracial individuals might serve as a bridge between typically homogenous groups.

As stated earlier, the navigation of a multiracial identity may facilitate greater social competence. Many studies in this domain cited Park's (1928, 1950) marginal man theory as support for the claim that the challenges accompanying multiracial people's "marginal" status might allow them to be more socially adaptable and rational in diverse settings (Cheng & Klugman, 2010; Burke & Kao, 2013). Due to this adaptability and affiliation with multiple groups, multiracial adolescents are thought to serve as bridges and mediators between racial groups (Quillian & Redd, 2009; Korgen, 1998).

Quillian & Redd (2009) conducted an analysis on friendship patterns of multiracial adolescents using 1994-1995 Add Health data. Particular questions of interest in their study were on racial identification and friend choice. One portion of the Add Health survey asks students to identify up to ten best friends (five male and five female). Prior to data analysis, Quillian & Redd (2009) assigned students to groups based on responses to both race measures in order to create comparison groups. The authors initially found a tendency for Black and White students to have more homogenous friend groups compared to Asian, Native American, Hispanic, and Multiracial students who had more diverse friend groups. However, controlling for school diversity lessened this gap, suggesting that diversity of friendship networks might be influenced by access to people of different racial backgrounds. Overall, the authors found that multiracial adolescents have highly diverse friendship networks and are identified as others' friends as much as their monoracial non-white peers.

While proximity and frequent interaction are important components of peer and friend influence, it is also important to examine the context of the classrooms and schools within which these relationships form.

Teacher influence on school belonging

Similar to their need for peer acceptance, adolescents also need to experience support from non-familial adults in order to have high feelings of belonging (Jackson & Davis, 2000; Eccles, 1999). These adults often come in the forms of classroom teachers and school administration. There is scant research investigating the roles that teachers play in the school belonging of multiracial adolescents, specifically. However, school belonging literature highlights teachers as pivotal influences in feelings of school belonging for adolescents.

Therefore, I think it is important to include a summary of these findings in the pursuit of a holistic understanding of school belonging.

In their study entitled, "Teacher and peer support for adolescents' motivation, engagement and school belonging," Kiefer, Alley & Ellerbock (2013) found that students perceived teacher support as a critical component to school belonging. Specifically, students cited positive interactions with teachers, high teacher involvement, respectful behavior, and clear expectations as promotive of feelings of belonging. Students felt supported by teachers who provided structure, communicated constructively, articulated the value of material, and created mutually respectful classroom environments (Quillian & Redd, 2009). Positive relationships with teachers are also related to fewer disciplinary referrals and higher post-secondary education pursuits (Murdock et al., 2000). Studies varied in their findings on the relation between autonomy-supportive teachers and feelings of belonging. Whereas some identified a positive relation between the two variables (Roeser et al., 1996; Wang & Holcombe, 2010), others found a negative relation between teacher choice and belonging (Kiefer, Alley, & Ellerbrock, 2015). While the former explanation seems more plausible given self-determination theory's argument that autonomy and belonging are essential components of motivation. However, it could be that freedom of choice encourages students to work more independently, lessening collaborative learning that could enhance feelings of belonging.

In addition to providing affective support, teachers foster school belonging through curriculum their students perceive as relevant. In a study on the factors of classroom belonging, Faircloth (2009) found that students most appreciated lessons with which they could make personal connections and learn about the cultures of their peers. Curriculum that connected to their families and backgrounds instilled a sense of pride, whereas learning about other cultures

helped them be more open-minded, adopt others' perspectives, recognize commonalities, and discuss difficult topics. Students also noted an increase in class belonging with activities in which they could express their feelings (e.g. enjoyment, interest, and investment) and beliefs (e.g. how their learning was affected). Supporting this finding, Quillian & Redd (2009) found that students experienced greater belonging in classes they perceived to be task-oriented with assignments that were interesting, important, and useful.

School influence on school belonging

In addition to navigating classroom spaces, students must contend with the environment of the school writ large. Due to academic practices that might separate students based on achievement or academic path, the racial composition of a school is not always equally reflected in all classrooms (Echols, Ivanich, & Graham, 2018). Students' perceptions of their schools as supportive and nurturing transfers to a perception of the self as an important contributing member to the school community (National Middle School Association, 2010). According to Finn (1989), school belonging means that students are "discernibly part of the school environment and that school constitutes an important part of their own experience" (p. 123).

School belonging is also impacted by how well students feel they fit into the context of their school. Being in an environment with a high proportion of similar peers is known as "congruence" and perception of high ethnic and racial congruence is especially pertinent in developing feelings of belonging for adolescents (Benner and Graham, 2007, 2009; Johnson et al., 2001). As individuals advance through adolescence, they tend to develop relationships with people of similar racial and ethnic backgrounds. This idea is known as racial homophily and is a stronger determinant of friendship choice than other characteristics such as gender, religion, and socioeconomic status (McPherson et al., 2001). Because of this, schools with a more racially

diverse population increase the chances that students will have peers of similar backgrounds, which increases feelings of belonging and minimizes feelings of isolation (Hamm and Faircloth, 2005; Moody, 2001).

Georgiades, Boyle, and Fife (2013) conducted a study using Add Health data to investigate the relation between immigrant/racial/ethnic congruence and emotional and behavioral problems. They hypothesized that school belonging would account for the relation between congruence and emotional/behavioral problems. School-level and individual-level data from 77,150 students was used. School-level variables consisted of racial/ethnic diversity, percentage of first generation immigrant students, and general school demographics (e.g. socioeconomic advantage, location, governance, etc.) Individual measures consisted of immigrant generation status, race/ethnicity, immigrant/racial/ethnic congruence (calculated by comparing student identification with school population), behavior problems (7-item scale measuring frequency and magnitude), emotional problems (14-item scale measuring frequency of depression, anxiety, and somatic issues), school belonging (five item scale: "I feel close to people at this school," "I feel like I am part of this school," "I am happy to be at this school," "The teachers at this school treat students fairly," and "I feel safe at my school"), and general demographic information (age, sex, socioeconomic status, etc.)

Confirming their hypotheses, the authors found negative associations between school belonging and emotional/behavioral problems. They also found the negative associations between immigrant/racial/ethnic congruence and emotional/behavioral problems for most subgroups. However, these results did not hold for all groups. School belonging did not account for the entire interaction between congruence and emotional/behavioral problems for third generation Black and Asian students. Additionally, there was a negative relationship between

congruence and school belonging for first generation Asian students. These results support well-documented claims that racial and cultural differences exist in schooling experiences. Additionally, they further illustrate the complexity of developing feelings of school belonging for adolescents. While having peers of similar racial/ethnic backgrounds is linked to higher school belonging for some racial/ethnic groups, it is not the case with all groups. Attention should be paid in facilitating diverse learning environments for students but that is not the end all-be all.

The variability in multiracial heritage makes high racial/ethnic congruence challenging to attain for multiracial adolescents. Students may have to settle for peers who are "similar enough" who may not be able to fully relate to their racial experiences. Although the homophily principle mentioned earlier assumes that multiracial individuals affiliate equally with each of their racial heritage groups (McPherson et al., 2001), research has found differences in the association of multiracial adolescents with monoracial groups (Alba & Nee, 2003).

Racial differences in school belonging

Research on school belonging is quickly expanding to investigate group differences (e.g., race, gender, socioeconomic status, diverse abilities, etc.). However, there are few investigations specific to the experiences of multiracial adolescents, a group whose complex identity development could affect feelings of belonging differently than their monoracial counterparts. The focus of school belonging research on monoracial groups limits its applicability to multiracial students. However, a holistic understanding of school belonging must include an investigation of the differences between single-race groups, which can inform interpretation of the multiracial experience. These differences are important for understanding the school belonging experiences of racial minorities as multiracial individuals are encompassed in this

group and might have some shared experiences. Additionally, developing a framework for racial differences in feelings of school belonging could help in assessing the impact of multiracialism on school belonging. For example, do school belonging levels experienced by Native American/White biracial individuals fall in the middle of those of their monoracial Native American and White counterparts? Does being a double minority (e.g. Asian/Black, Latino/Middle Eastern, etc.) have a different effect on school belonging than having White ancestry as a multiracial person?

Research on racial differences in feelings of school belonging may be particularly important in the current review. The growing interest in racial achievement gaps has encouraged an abundance of research on schooling factors that continue to marginalize African American and Latino students while supporting White and Asian students. Unfortunately, studies comparing school belonging between Black and White students have yielded inconsistent results. For example, Johnson, Crosnoe, and Elder (2001) examined Add Health Data and found that African American students had lower levels of school attachment than White and Hispanic students throughout both middle school and high school. However, Cheng and Klugman (2010) found that Black males had higher levels of school belonging than White and Latino males. In a study testing a racially inclusive measure of social support and school belonging, Wegmann (2017) found that students who identified as Black/African American reported higher levels of school belonging than their White counterparts. Relating this finding to multiracial students and identity development, Burke & Kao (2013) found that Black/White biracial students' levels of school belonging differed based on in-school racial identification. The students who identified as Black at school experienced greater school belonging than those identifying as White. However, research has also shown that the positive relationship between school belonging and academic

achievement weakens as Black/African American students continue through school (Voelkl, 1997).

Studies have found that, compared to White students, Hispanic/Latino students have either similar or higher levels of school belonging (Benner & Graham, 2009; Johnson et al., 2001) but Latino males have lower levels of growth in school belonging than White males over the course of middle school (Cheng & Klugman, 2010). In the Latino student population, Goodenow and Grady (2003) found that school belonging is strongly associated with motivation. However, some have also recognized the challenge in aggregating the Hispanic/Latino experience under a single umbrella. Vaquera (2009) conducted a study measuring the relationship between friendship and school outcomes of five different ethnic groups: Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, Central/South Hispanic, and White. Although school belonging was most influenced by friendships within the school, as was recognized in earlier sections, the presence of friends in school impacted school engagement differently between ethnic groups. Although school engagement is outside the scope of this review, it is important to recognize the wealth of information that can be lost when research fails to account for differences. Similarly, the inclusion of multiracial students in school factor research is a step in the right direction but may continue to be shortcoming if various racial makeups are not accounted for.

Incongruent levels of school belonging among racial groups could be attributable to the differential impact of factors contributing to school belonging. For example, African American students experience greater conflict with their teachers (Split, Hughes, Wu, and Kwok, 2012) and are disciplined more harshly and more frequently than their White counterparts (Nicholson-Crotty, Birchmeier, & Valentine, 2009; Skiba et al., 2014). Other studies have found that positive teacher relationships had a stronger association with school engagement for African American

students than White students (Downey & Ainsworth-Darnell, 2002; Graham, Taylor, & Hudley, 1998; Meehan, Hughes & Cavell, 2003). As mentioned previously, peer acceptance has the greatest influence on school belonging for adolescents. While many students experience discrimination during this time period, there is evidence of racial differences in the research. Compared to other minority groups, Fisher et al. (2000) found that Asian American youth experienced greater peer discrimination, which was associated with greater distress.

Few studies have investigated school belonging between different groups of multiracial individuals. Using Add Health data, Campbell & Eggerling-Boeck (2006) found that self-identifying American Indian/White biracial and multiracial adolescents as a group experienced the lowest levels of social acceptance among all monoracial and multiracial groups. In the same study, adolescents who self-identified as American Indian/Black biracial experienced the lowest levels of "closeness to school," followed by the combined group of multiracial participants and monoracial Black adolescents. In their study on multiracial adolescents' academic achievement and school attachment, Kao, Doyle & Burke (2009) found that mixed minority students (Black/Asian) had the least school belonging, followed by students who identified as Black. Students who identified as Black/White biracial fell between their Black and White counterparts and there was no significant difference in school belonging between White/Asian biracial and White students. These results illuminates the danger of aggregating data on different multiracial groups. Campbell & Eggerling-Boeck (2006) note that the extremity of scores for the American Indian/White biracial group most likely skewed the significant negative effects observed in the multiracial population as a whole, masking the lack of negative effects for other multiracial groups and clouded the conclusions that might be taken from the data.

Limitations and Future Directions

Additional influences on school belonging

The literature on school belonging primarily focuses on the influences covered in the previous section. However, other contributing factors were mentioned in lower frequency and with less support and merit deeper review in the future.

Adolescents spend a large portion of their waking hours at school, during which socialization and identity development is constantly occurring. While not explicitly classroom learning nor a component of school day structure, extracurricular activities allow students to connect with peers who have similar interests. In a study on middle schoolers' feelings of belonging, Nichols (2006) found that school activities were an influential component in students' feelings of school belonging. School-based extracurricular activities have been found to be related to schooling belonging (Kao, Doyle and Burke, 2009) and in their study of the racial dimensions of an urban school, researchers observed that one of the few places in which students of different racial groups truly connected was through sports teams (Cusick and Ayling, 1974). Despite these findings and an increase in multiracial research, a literature search on multiracial students and participation in athletics yielded scant results. Given that school clubs, activities and sports can provide students the opportunity to identify common interests that surpass racial differences, they could be especially influential for multiracial students who do not easily identify with any certain racial group. Given empirical evidence that multiracial adolescents experience social marginalization due to ambiguous racial identities (Czimadia and Ispa, 2014), further exploration of the role of extracurricular activities on multiracial identity development and school belonging would begin to fill the gaps in the growing literature.

Given the large role that family plays in the socialization of youth, it might also be assumed family influences non-familial connections such as school belonging. In a cross-cultural study of school belonging, Chiu, Chow, McBride, & Mol (2016) found that students' sense of school belonging was affected by family characteristics such as language spoken at home, immigrant status, family wealth, and number of books at home. Similarly, Hill et al. (2004) found a positive relationship between parents' education and feelings of school belonging. These findings mirror observations mentioned earlier about the relationship between parents' education and multiracial identification (Roth, 2005), unveiling another connection between multiracial identity development and school belonging. Future research should probe deeper into the effects that family and home environments have on adolescent school belonging, specifically for interracial families who face different challenges when socializing multiracial adolescents.

Many of the studies included in this review also investigated gender differences in levels of school belonging and found that girls tend to experience higher school belonging than boys (Cheng & Klugman, 2010; Gillen-O'Neel & Fuligni, 2013; Goodenow, 1993; Johnson et al., 2001; Voelkl, 1997). While a thorough summary of these findings is outside the scope of this review, it is important to recognize the complexity of school belonging and the existence of within-group (i.e. racial/ethnic) differences that should inform future research.

Subjectivity of racial identification

One of the key characteristics of biracial individuals is a freedom to self-select their racial identity, an option typically unavailable to monoracial individuals. Scholars have shown that people who are biracial identify with either their majority racial group, minority racial group or both racial groups (biracial) (Czimadia and Ispa, 2014). Therefore, a Black-Asian individual who identifies as Black would be included in data with other self-identifying Black students,

potentially veiling the influence of his or her Asian heritage. These self-classifications vary not only between persons, but within them, allowing for different racial identities in different environments or situations. With this in mind, it is important to recognize that research on biracial individuals is predominantly self-report and the variability in self-identification may skew results.

Reconciling the subjectivity of racial identification in biracial individuals is a very complicated matter. Race is a social construct which means that its salience is impacted by an abundance of factors such as others' perceptions, parent socialization, peer influence, stereotype internalization, self-concept, and connection to racial history. For example, the Black-Asian biracial student mentioned earlier may have been raised by his single Black mother without any contact with his Asian father or exposure to his Asian culture. Phenotypically he can pass as Black, he has been raised in a predominantly Black neighborhood, his family and friends are mostly Black, and his experiences as a "Black" male allow him to relate to the prejudice endured by Black men throughout history. However, in a study in which data collection included the heritage of both his mother and father, this participant would be classified as biracial despite no previous identification with biracialism.

Not all studies use self-report to collect racial data. However, those that seek such information from a third party are equally susceptible to classifications that do not capture a child's complete heritage. Parents can choose to identify their children as either one of their races or as biracial (Czimadia & Ispa, 2014). Teachers often use physical features (ie. skin color, hair texture, face shape) to identify race and then group multiracial students with a monoracial minority group (Williams, 2009). These identifications may be incongruent with the child's

personal classification and/or their heritage, further misrepresenting their experiences and the factors that contribute to them.

As mentioned earlier, racial identification is especially fluid for multiracial individuals. The subjectivity and diversity of self- and other-classification could convolute research findings. In order to accurately capture the influence of heritage and racial identification on biracial people, researchers should consider recording the racial heritage of both parents, the individual's self-classification, and perceived classifications of others such as parents and teachers. This would allow for the consideration of both implicit and explicit expressions of identity, disparities between self- and other-classification, and unintentional ignorance of parts of one's identity.

Aside from studies using Add Health data, much of the literature focused on the perspective of either a multiracial adolescent or a parent of a multiracial adolescent. This specificity of data sources allows for a narrow scope of a complex issue. Although not inclusive of all factors, this review showed that there are many influences in racial identity development such as peers, curriculum, and teachers. Knowing that discrepancies exist between self and social perceptions, it is important to examine data from all perspectives as well as address any themes within mismatched data.

Overgeneralization of multiracial classifications

Much of the existing education and child development literature groups multiracial students into a single category without accounting for the variation within this population (Williams, 2009). Williams (2011) suggests that researchers need to improve racial categorization methods in schools in order to best capture student demographics and best meet the needs of multiracial students. Research should account for racial makeup, social perception, and racial fluidity when collecting data and drawing inferences from findings. By aggregating

multiracial individuals into a single unit without recognizing within-group heterogeneity, we can miss important distinctions that can increase our understanding of the multiracial experience.

Even within monoracial populations, broad generalizations of research findings connecting race to factors such as academic achievement, healthy socialization, and feelings of belonging can be difficult to make. However, these correlations can be even more challenging in multiracial populations due to the plethora of "combinations" within this community. Multiracial individuals may share the unique experience of belonging to more than one race but the emphasis on and interaction between each person's racial identities results in innumerable experiences far too diverse to classify under the umbrella of "the multiracial experience." Additionally, the past relations between groups of people who interracially procreate (ie. Blacks and Whites) may impact one's experience as a member of two groups with a tense history.

Census data from the years 2000 and 2010 show a large increase in the number of multiracial people in America. Although we know that this population is growing, we have yet to know the effects of this growth on the social acceptability of multiracial identities. Could it be that a portion of the 2 million person increase are people who previously identified with one of their racial heritages and now either feels more comfortable embracing a more multifaceted identity or is aware of the option to do so? As multiracial classifications grow in number and complexity, research should investigate motivations of claiming a multiracial identity.

Conclusion

The multiracial experience is a "mixed" one – the need to belong mixed with the pressure to succeed mixed with the dynamics of family mixed with the development of a healthy identity. As all of these parts come together, they create a beautiful, whole person with a complete history and unique story. While great strides have been made in the past few decades, there is still much to learn about the experience of multiracial individuals. The complexity of the multiracial experience calls for critical evaluation of any observations in order to avoid overgeneralization or essentialization of data. For parents, the answers to developing a healthy racial identity are not found in a parenting book; for peers, friendship should not require "choosing" one race; and for adolescents, clarity is not as simple as checking a box on a questionnaire. Research needs to expand in order to account for the vastness and variety within this population. Resources need to be readily available to help parents and their multiracial children bridge divides and have necessary but difficult conversations. Schools need to incorporate the experience of all students into curriculum. Most importantly, multiracial adolescents need access to supportive systems that allow them to embrace their full identity, no choosing required.

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